



Headteacher: Mrs Lindsay Robertson BA (Hons) NPQH

### Attendance Explanation

<b><u>GREEN</u></b> Pupils with attendance from 96% to 100%
<b><u>AMBER</u></b> Pupils with attendance from 90% to 95.9%
<b><u>RED</u></b> Pupils with attendance below 90%

Parents have approached me to ask about the school’s position on absenteeism. Queries have been raised around recent letters issued to parents informing them that they are required to attend meetings to discuss possible actions, including the issuing of fines etc.

Firstly, it is the Department of Education’s policy to issue fines (also known as fixed penalties) for persistent absenteeism; I do however understand the necessity to do so in some cases.

It is the Department of Education / Ofsted that dictate that attendance below 96% is poor and that below 90% is persistent absenteeism. The reasons for this have been made clear; good attendance is vital to the success of pupils and their well-being. Our own school data, as well as that issued nationally, makes clear that poor attendance results in poor outcomes for children.

### The Law

Children must attend school under the Education Act 1989 (revised). Poor attendance at school can result in one or more of the following:

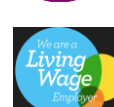
- A Parenting Order
- An Education Supervision Order
- A School Attendance Order
- A Fixed Penalty Notice

Parents need to understand that attendance is an issue for children at our school - especially persistent absence. School relies on parents support to rectify this issue but will actively seek to enforce the necessary legal actions to address absence where parents do not engage or recognise the legitimate concerns.

### They are only children; does attendance really matter?

Yes it does! The fact is that **children who attend school for less than 95% of the time underperform significantly and have ominously reduced lifetime opportunities.** It is not good enough to send your child to a good school if absenteeism impacts on achievement. Schools with poor attendance or diminished outcomes do not remain ‘Good’.

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**What if my child has been ill?**

Absence is absence – it impacts on a child’s learning and well-being regardless of the reason. This is clear under the actions taken under National Policy. I appreciate that parents state that absence has been as a result of specific, unavoidable illness but their child is still impacted by their absence from school. A child who is absent due to intermittent illness, has missed the same amount of time as a child who has been absent as a result of a parent’s failure to bring them to school for unauthorised reasons.

If a parent is subjected to a fixed penalty notice, this can be appealed against on medical grounds but it should be noted that the absence is not ignored owing to circumstance and may not be seen as good reason in court without specific, long term, medical support and evidence.

**Are you wanting parents to bring children into school when they are ill?**

No but we do ask parents to consider carefully if absence is really necessary. We are not medical practitioners and cannot make decisions on behalf of medical professionals or indeed parent – the choice is yours.

**My child always attends school yet has unauthorised absences – how can this be?**

If your child arrives late, beyond the close of the register, the late mark is converted to an unauthorised absence. Again, this is a national requirement, not the schools. This is done because too much time in school has been missed. Arrive late and children may be considered absent; arrive persistently late, and it is easy to fall below expectation.

**I can not afford a fine, how will I pay the school?**

Firstly, fixed penalty notices are not issued by, or paid to the school – despite what may be the common belief. The council and courts issue fixed penalty notices and the revenue is taken by them. If you can not pay the fine, this is a matter for them to deal with in line with other unpaid debts. The school has absolutely no say in this.

**If I do not pay the fine, what will happen?**

Simply put the fine increases up to £2500. If you continue not to pay, you can be given up to a 3 month prison sentence.

**I have received a letter about my child’s absence- what can I do?**

Willow Wood Community Primary School is here to help you when and where we can.

- The first step is to attend the meeting and work with the school. This will be your chance to seek support if there are any underlying reasons for the absences. While we can not act on your behalf, we can signpost you to see if there are any services, including ourselves who can help.

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- Recognise that there is an issue, and do all you can to reverse any absence trends. This may be easier said than done, but it cannot be ignored for your child's sake – it is never too late to make the changes needed.
- Act promptly if you receive notices, attendance letters etc. The issues will not go away.

I need to state that it is my duty as Headteacher to address poor attendance and the duty of the Governing Body to hold me accountable for it. The vast majority of parents at Willow Wood Community Primary School ensure their children attend in line with the expectations and I am grateful for this; as are my staff.

I cannot, however, ignore that attendance in my school, for too many children, is below that expected. We are working hard to continually drive up standards in school and to provide exciting and inspiring experiences for the children, however, too many children are missing out and their learning is suffering as a result. This has a negative impact on the children who hear their peers discussing what they have done as well as the wider school.

Your support is much appreciated.

Mrs Robertson

Headteacher

Further information can be found at –

[Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK](#)

[Keeping children safe in education 2024](#)

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